

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) An endoscope comprising:

an insertion unit having a soft portion, the soft portion including a small-diameter portion and a large-diameter portion;

~~a small-diameter portion which is included in the soft portion and whose outer diameter is substantially the same over the whole length thereof;~~

[[a]] the large-diameter portion ~~which~~ is formed on the operator side of the soft portion opposite to the small-diameter portion and whose outer diameter is larger than [[the]] an outer diameter of the small-diameter portion; and

a tapered portion included in the soft portion linking the small-diameter portion and the large-diameter portion, wherein:

at least part of the tapered portion is ~~disposed forward the soft portion~~ separated 70 cm or less from a distal end.

2. (Original) An endoscope according to Claim 1, wherein the small-diameter portion is long enough to be bent 180° while forming an arc having a minimum radius.

3. (Previously Presented) An endoscope according to Claim 1, wherein at least part of the tapered portion is located forward an endoscope portion separated 45 cm from the distal end.

4. (Previously Presented) An endoscope according to Claim 2, wherein at least part of the tapered portion is located forward an endoscope portion separated 45 cm from the distal end.

5. (Previously Presented) An endoscope according to Claim 1, wherein indices indicating distances from the distal end are inscribed on the soft portion.

6. (Previously Presented) An endoscope according to Claim 2, wherein indices indicating distances from the distal end are inscribed on the soft portion.

7. (Previously Presented) An endoscope according to Claim 3, wherein indices indicating distances from the distal end are inscribed on the soft portion.

8. (Previously Presented) An endoscope according to Claim 4, wherein indices indicating distances from the distal end are inscribed on the soft portion.

9. (Original) An endoscope according to Claim 5, wherein the plurality of indices is inscribed equidistantly.

10. (Original) An endoscope according to Claim 6, wherein the plurality of indices is inscribed equidistantly.

11. (Original) An endoscope according to Claim 7, wherein the plurality of indices is inscribed equidistantly.

12. (Original) An endoscope according to Claim 8, wherein the plurality of indices is inscribed equidistantly.

13. (Original) An endoscope according to Claim 9, wherein the tapered portion extends between two of the indices.

14. (Original) An endoscope according to Claim 10, wherein the tapered portion extends between two of the indices.

15. (Original) An endoscope according to Claim 11, wherein the tapered portion extends between two of the indices.

16. (Original) An endoscope according to Claim 12, wherein the tapered portion extends between two of the indices.

17. (Currently Amended) An insertion unit for an endoscope, the insertion unit having a soft portion comprising:

a soft portion including a small-diameter portion and a large-diameter portion;

~~a small-diameter portion which is included in the soft portion and whose diameter is substantially the same over the whole length thereof;~~

[[a] the large diameter portion ~~which~~ is formed on the operator side of the soft portion opposite to the small diameter portion and whose outer diameter is larger than [[the]] an outer diameter of the small diameter portion; and

a tapered portion included in the soft portion linking the small-diameter portion and the large-diameter portion, wherein:

at least part of the tapered portion is ~~disposed forward the soft portion~~ separated 70 cm or less from [[the]] a distal end.